FIRST COMICS
AUG. $1.00
NO. 17
$1.25 CANADA
E-MAN
Smelt Quest!
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Staton

%FIRST COMICS,
1014 DAVIS STREET,
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
60201

Dear Mr. Gold,

I have been reading E-Man for 13 issues now (all of them) and I feel I must comment now before it's too late. I haven't written before because I felt letters that were too critical would be passed over. That is until I saw the letters in E-Man #13, which encouraged me to write to you.

I am extremely worried about the future of this book.

E-Man #1-5 were hilarious, gut splitting and altogether hysterical.

But then others took over the writing and then the book started sliding. Joe Staton is a great artist but not a great writer.

Sure some of the humor is still there but it's more subtle, such as when the inmates put the steering wheel in the back seat, because it was safer back there. Instead of laughing at it, I agreed.

Sure the humor element is still there but it's tongue-in-cheek and somewhat forced. E-Man is becoming somewhat straight superhero schtick, which is not what E-Man is supposed to be.

Hopefully, something will be done before E-Man is gone. I hope so, because I care a lot about this book.

Harlan Krissoff
184 Kearny Ave.
Perth Amboy, N.J. 08861

I also care a lot about **E-Man** *and his crew, but I think I have a somewhat different view of what represents forced humor. To me, when you manipulate the characters into elaborate setups for gags, with no regard for their personalities, and run the gag into the punchline with a big sign saying, "Hey guys, here's the big punchline!" — well, that's forced humor. I am more inclined to let the characters amble through an adventure encountering a giggle here and there as it occurs. As to what* **E-Man** *is supposed to be, Nick Cuti established that ten years ago in the Charlton run. In light of that, some of our earlier issues have to be seen as merely abberations.*

Hey,

E-Man is doing well without ... what was his name? Anyway, #13 was very enjoyable. Staton's Chaos wasn't as close to the real thing as it should have been. He sounded more like Mr. T and his appearance was less than god-like. He lacked that solid stance associated with all Warp characters. But it was still fun. I think that as First gets older, crossovers will get smoother. Congratulations on your First one.

Two more things: (1) Why is Rick Burchett given credit twice? Are you trying to tell us he inked the art and the letters? C'mon! (2) Where the hell is Chaos supposed to be in the last panel of page 23? I couldn't make heads or tails of it.

Watch out for snakes.

Zapper
404 S. Elk Ave.
Fayetteville, TN 37334

Rick gets two credits because I made a mistake in correcting something else. Long-time **E-Man** *colorist* **Wendy Flore** *was inadvertently omitted from the credits box. So that her credit would match the rest of the lettering by the redoubtable* **Ken Bruzenak,** *I xeroxed her line from a previous issue and pasted it in where it belonged. Unfortunately, in moving things around I also picked up a credit line for Rick from that same previous issue. As far as I can tell, you're the only one who noticed.*

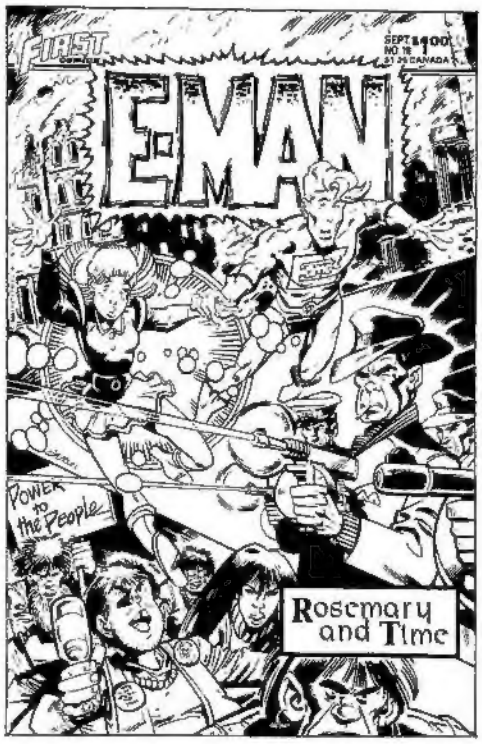
Chaos is just going around a corner in Cynosure. Whenever you can't tell where the hell you are, you stand a good chance of being in Cynosure. If you think Chaos sounds like Mr. T wait until you see more of Mr. Z (of the B Team).

Dear E-Men,

It had to happen. It just had to happen! I'm talking about the "inevitable crossover point." E-Man meets Prince Chaos of Warp. E-Man is a fine book, but it's not the kind of book that can have a crossover with Warp characters or any other First character for that matter. It's just like having Morgana Trace meeting Reuben Flagg or Jon Sable meeting Black Flame. I also noticed something about E-Man #12. Jon Sable, Freelance was mentioned in it. I hope he doesn't crossover with E-Man because E-Man's world is too comical for crossovers with serious characters. E-Man is an excellent book. Mr. Staton is doing a great job on it, but please no crossovers, stick to parodies. Oh, are there any plans for a Nexus parody?

Mike Emery
208 Otis
Kingsville, TX 78363

We currently have no plans for a Nexus parody, but there is a very good chance that **E-Man** *may soon be encountering someone who bears a vague resemblance to a certain other Capital character.*



NEXT ISSUE: E-Man and Mauser both encounter Mysterious Females and come face to face with the Past. Who is Rosemary? Who is Angel? Why is Teddy hanging from the rafters?

— Joe Staton

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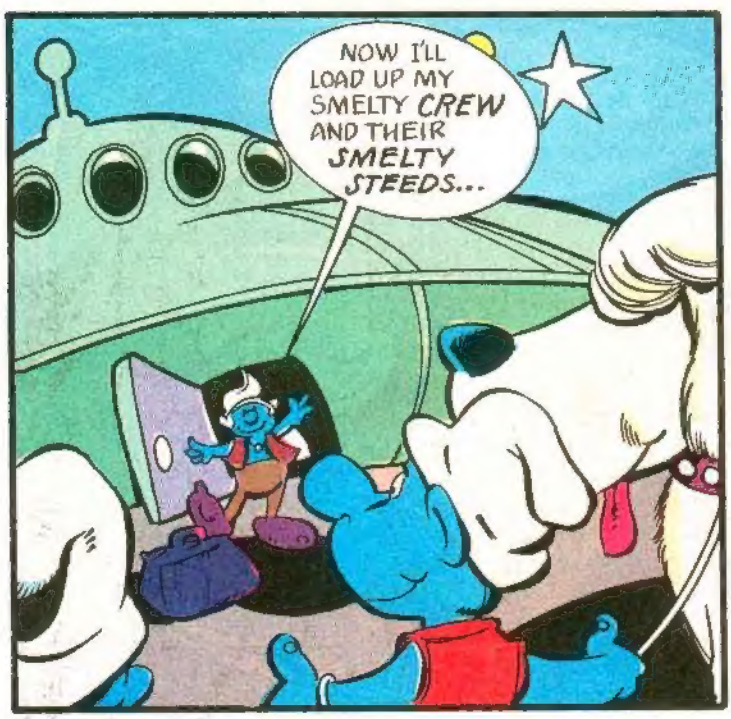
A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

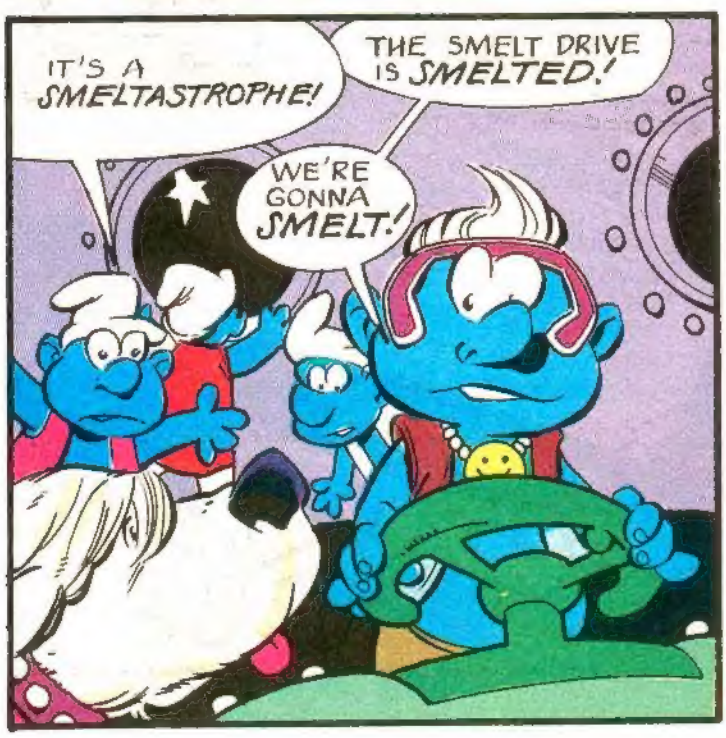
FROM THE SMELT SAGA BOOK III:
THE LUNCHBEAST IS ALMOST READY, SCOOTER.
AH, MY GOOD FRIEND SKYWIDE...
HOW CAN YOU EVEN THINK OF FOOD? EVER SINCE GRANDFATHER SMELT TOLD US THE LEGEND, I CAN ONLY THINK OF HER.
CHOMP!
WHAT IF THE STORIES ARE TRUE? WHAT IF PATTY SMELT- THE LEGENDARY SMELTETTE- REALLY IS OUT THERE SOMEWHERE?
GONE TO THE TWINKLY THINGS IN THE SKY...
CRUNCH! IT'S CRISPY. YOU OUGHTA HAVE SOME....
AH, PATTY. WHERE DID YOU GO IN YOUR BIG-GOING-AWAY-IN-THE-SKY MACHINE?
SLURP!
WE MUST FIND HER— AND WE SHALL!
THUS SWEARS SCOOTER, THE CUTEST OF ALL THE SMELTS!
CHOMP! SLURP!
Panel 5:
Scooter waves sword, strikes heroic posture.
Scooter:
"Thus swears Scooter, the cutest of all the Smelts!"
A TYPEWRITER IN UPSTATE NEW YORK: THE QUEST IS TOLD.

AND IN HOLLYWOOD, THE QUEST IS RETOLD.... SORT OF.
SMELTERRIFIC!
THIS IS REALLY A SMELTING FINE SMELT SHIP!

SO YOU SMELTED IT ALL WITH YOUR SMELTHAMMER, HUH, SCOOTER SMELT?
SMELTORECT, KING PAPA SMELT, YOUR SMELTNESS!


NOW I'LL LOAD UP MY SMELTY CREW AND THEIR SMELTY STEEDS...

.... AND WE'LL GO SMELTQUESTING THROUGH THE SMELTIVERSE...
...TO FIND PATTY SMELT!


IT'S A SMELTASTROPHE!
THE SMELT DRIVE IS SMELTED!
WE'RE GONNA SMELT!

GOOD GOING, GALVESTON! WE'VE GOT TO GET THESE STORY BOARDS TO THE ANIMATORS BEFORE THEY STRIKE OR WE MAY LOSE THE WHOLE SEASON!
SATURDAY MORNING STUDIOS
SURE THING, MR. MATION!

LINCOLN PARK, CHICAGO. THE QUEST CONTINUES.
SCOOTER, THE CUTEST OF THE SMELTS, HAS FOUND A BIG ROCK TO STAND ON. HE STRIKES AN HEROIC POSE.
THE REST OF THE SMELTS HAVE FOUND A LOT OF DRY WOOD.
GLEEP!
LIKE IT OR NOT, TEDDY Q HAS BECOME A CENTERPIECE OF....
EHAH™
created by
NICOLA CUTI
and JOE STATON
WRITTEN
& PENCILLED by
JOE STATON
INKED BY RICK BURCHETT
LETTERED BY CORINNA TAYLOR
COLORED BY WENDY FIORE
EDITED BY MIKE GOLD
Smelt Quest!

THE ROGERS PARK, CHICAGO, APARTMENT OF NOVA KANE AND ALEC TRONN, A.K.A. E-MAN.
NORMALLY, IT IS ALSO HOME TO THE ERSTWHILE MARSUPIAL WHO NOW CONTEMPLATES LUNCH IN THE PARK.
FOR THE MOMENT, IT IS ALSO HOME TO ONE OTHER...
MAUSER IS DEFINITELY GETTING ON MY NERVES, ALEC!
CRUNCH! CRUNCH!
BUT HE'S STILL HURT, NOVA —AND YOU DID SAVE HIS LIFE WHEN BOAR TRIED TO KILL HIM!
WE ALL MAKE MISTAKES.
IT'S NOT ENOUGH I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY LONG-LOST ENERGY POWERS RETURNING WITHOUT WARNING..
..BUT TO USE THEM... TO SAVE HIM!
CRUNCH! CRUNCH!
NOVA, THAT'S NOT...
OH, YOU'RE RIGHT, BIG FELLA...
TEDDY—?
IT'S JUST THAT I HAVE ENOUGH TO DO TAKING CARE OF YOU AND TEDDY.
NOVA, WHERE IS TEDDY?
4

GLEEP!
I CAN'T GET THIS STUPID EARTHISH FIRESTICK TO WORK! CAN'T COOK THE LUNCHBEAST IF WE CAN'T LIGHT THE FIRE!
I'M HUNGRY! LET'S JUST EAT IT RAW!
?
ALIEN THOUGHTS BOUNCE OFF TEDDY'S FEVERED BRAIN...
!
HE THINKS HARD IN RETURN.
mm
HE THINKS REAL HARD!
mm mm mm
SKYWIDE, DO YOU GROK—?
! ?
THE LUNCHBEAST IS THINKING AT US!
BUT LUNCHBEASTS CAN'T THINK!
5

GET HIM DOWN, GUYS! HE'S NO LUNCHBEAST!
SORRY ABOUT THAT. WE'RE QUESTING. WE TRAVEL AT NIGHT AND TRAP LUNCH-BEASTS FOR FOOD...
BUT THERE'S THIS EVIL GIANT CHASING US!
WHEW!
HUH? YOU KNOW SOMEBODY WHO CAN HELP US?
C'MON, GUYS! THE NOT-A-LUNCHBEAST SAYS HE KNOWS SOMEBODY WHO CAN PULL THE ARMS AND LEGS OFF THE GIANT!
YAY!
WHEE!
YIP!
YIP!
6

FIRST NOTES

SUBMITTING SUBMISSIONS

Recently I've noticed — with a combination of comradeship and sarcastic glee — that my fellow editors at most of the other comics companies have been having exactly the same problem I've been having, at least in one specific area.

We're all getting deluged with submissions from would-be writers and artists.

Now I don't want to bum you nouveau-Byrnes out, but I've got to say this: of the two dozen or more serious submissions First Comics receives each week, at least 23 are bottom-drawer.

If you want to send us your stuff, please remember the following points:

1) Your work must be really fantastic. It is not good enough to look at the worst stuff on the stands and say, "I can do better than this."

2) Do not enclose originals — first-class photocopies are preferable. If you follow all the rules, you may get your stuff back eventually, but do not risk your originals.

3) Writers: don't send us proposals the length of the Manhattan telephone directory. Keep them down to three double-spaced pages, outlining the basic concept, each of the major characters, and the first dozen issues. Full scripts are not necessary. Proposals for stories involving already-published characters will not be read; in case any of the writers working with us get hit by a truck, I've already got at least three people in mind for replacement.

4) Artists: sending us pretty pictures isn't enough. We need to see a few pages of sample continuity. Show us samples of each stage: uninked pencils, uncolored inks. Show your work to your friends first and get their honest opinions. Show your stuff to your friendly neighborhood comics shop owner — some of the best referrals we've received come from shop owners.

5) Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for the return of your work. Otherwise you won't get it back.

6) Before you send it, think twice — is it really, *really* good?

7) Be prepared to wait at least six months for a response. We honestly get that many unsolicited submissions, and going through that stuff (referred to in the trade as the "slush pile") is a low priority; getting out our comics is always our highest priority.

8) Don't be disappointed if you get a form letter back, with various observations and tips checked off. Again, we simply do not have time to write everybody an individual letter.

9) Would-be artists should address their samples to **Joe Staton** (don't hit me, Joe! Please don't hit me!); writers should send their stuff to me.

10) Don't call us asking if we've received your submissions, or if we've read it or liked it. When we do have time to get to your stuff, I'd rather get it than tell you about why we don't have time to do it in the first place. Besides, 95% of those calls don't get past Ivy Graham, our crack sanity-control engineer.

11) Better — and faster — still: go to one of the comics conventions we attend and show us your work. You'll get an instant response — possibly a bit abrupt, and I apologize for that, but it sure beats waiting six months.

12) First Comics assumes absolutely no responsibility whatsoever for your unsolicited submission. You're sending it at your own risk.

If it sounds like I'm being overly harsh, well, maybe so. Being a comics professional is a lot like being an actor: for every job opening there's a thousand potentially talented newcomers waiting to claw their way in. It takes years of sweat, labor and personal sacrifice to become good enough to even audition, and it takes a few more years to hone your skills. Deadline pressure is intense, and unless you are both fantastic and fast you'll probably make more money doing something you wouldn't enjoy half as much.

It's a dirty little job, but somebody's got to do it.

— Mike Gold

FIRST IN APRIL!

American Flagg! #11: Sheiskopf is in, Ironheart is deactivated, Reuben's on the offensive and Raul has taken to arms — all as **Howard Chaykin** introduces . . . the Videorangers!

E-Man #17: Kitty Porn and Ford Fairmont return! Teddy Q. is kidnapped! And E-Man and Nova Kane undertake their most dangerous mission yet: Smeltquest! Will comics ever be the same?

Grimjack #1: At last! The most in-demand comic book spin-off of the decade! Now **John Ostrander** and **Timothy Truman** have an entire monthly book for the Cynosure-spun tales of **Grimjack** and the intergalactic gang down in Munden's Bar!

Jon Sable, Freelance #15: Can **Mike Grell's** intrepid hero withstand Castro's army and an entire South American revolution to locate a lost Incan treasure, buried in the middle of "Green Hell?"

Mars #8: As the World War continues, Morgana and her fellow crew members discover the fate of the original Martian expeditionary force — as the Black Flame pulls himself off the barroom floor in time to do battle in the Nightmare Dimension!

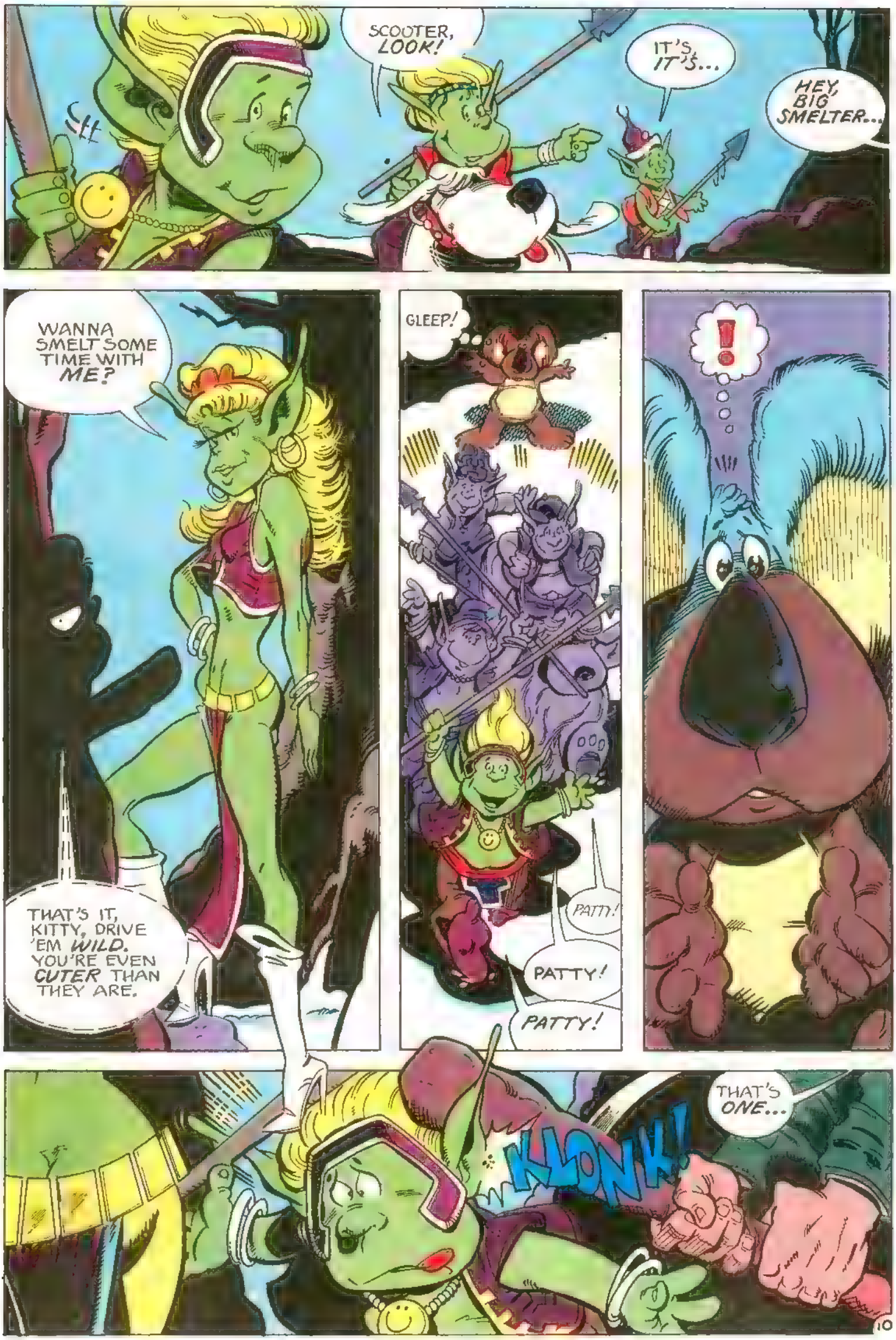
Starslayer #19: Another booklength chiller, as Torin gives new meaning to his streetname! The Starslayer already destroyed the Earth — can he now commit the ultimate act of destruction?

Warp #15: Sargon once again assumes the role of Mistress of War (but not for Fen-Ra), the Outrider faces off with his mortal enemy, and Cumulus must do battle with the Grim Reaper for the sole of his deceased alter-ego!

WE'RE CLOSING IN ON THEM, GAYLORD!
ROOOF!
I DON'T KNOW HOW THEY ESCAPED, BUT THE'LL FIND OUT YOU DON'T BREAK YOUR CONTRACT WITH PHIL MATION!
ROOOF!
C'MON, BOY, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN TRACK THOSE SMELTS!
WELL, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? LET'S GO! C'MON—
OH, ALRIGHT!
RRF!
RRRRUMMPFF!
GRRROOPFF! UMMM...
Y'KNOW, YOU MIGHT BE AN INTERGALACTIC SPACE TRAVELER BUT YOU SURE LOOK AND ACT LIKE A DOG.
LUCKY FOR ME, YOUR DOG BUISCUIT ADDICTION IS MUCH STRONGER THAN YOUR LOYALTY TO THE SMELTS!
ROOOF!
THEIR CAMP! THEY CAN'T BE FAR AWAY!

HEY, RED, CAN I HAVE SOME MORE POTATO CHIPS?
MORE—?!
POTATO CHIPS
THANKS, RED--
SLUUP! CRUNCH!
DUCKS of HAZZARD
QUACK!
WELL, TEDDY'S TRACKS LEAD TO THE MAILBOX....
PROBABLY SENDING ANOTHER LOVE LETTER TO AMY IRVING!
BUT THE SNOW'S MELTING, AND HIS TRACKS GET LOST IN THE SLUSH...
MAYBE I CAN PICK UP THE SMELL OF EUCALYPTUS AND CORNFLAKES...
YEP!
SURE, E-MAN. HE WENT TOWARD THE PARK, CHASING A SHEEPDOG!
THANKS, ARTHUR.
UH... YEAH.
YOU DOIN' THE ENTERPRISE?
YOU GOTTA WORK ON IT.
EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC!
OH, WELL, HERE'S THE PARK. I HOPE TEDDY'S AROUND HERE SOMEPLACE.
8

YES, FRIEND NOT-REALLY-A-LUNCHBEAST, THE EVIL GIANT DID TERRIBLE THINGS TO OUR BODIES AND MADE US PERFORM BIZARRE RITUALS IN FRONT OF CURIOUS DEVICES.
EASY, PITSTOPPER, THERE'S NOTHING THERE.
RRURMMP!?
WE'VE GOT THEM NOW, GAYLORD!
YOU KEEP AN EYE ON THEM, WHILE I...
ROOOFF!
OH, ALRIGHT— JUNKIE!
STUPID ANIMAL! JUST BECAUSE HE CAN TRACK THE SMELTS, I GOTTA KEEP HIM SUPPLIED.
BUT I KNOW THE SMELTS REAL WEAKNESS —AND I HAVE MY SECRET WEAPON IN THE VAN.
ARE YOU READY, KITTY DARLING?
YES, MR. MATION.
GOODNESS! IT'S KITTY PORN, CUTEST AND MOST CONFUSED OF THE F-MEN, WHOM WE LAST SAW IN E-MAN #3 -- MIKE


SCOOTER, LOOK!
IT'S, IT'S...
HEY, BIG SMELTER...
WANNA SMELT SOME TIME WITH ME?
THAT'S IT, KITTY, DRIVE 'EM WILD. YOU'RE EVEN CUTER THAN THEY ARE.
GLEEP!
PATTY!
PATTY!
PATTY!
!
KLONK!
THAT'S ONE...

AND THAT'S THE LAST OF THEM!
GOLLY, MR. MATION, I'M COLD!
ROOWWP?
!?
HERE'S A BISCUIT, GAYLORD. MAKE SURE THEY DON'T GET AWAY WHILE I BACK-UP THE VAN.
OH, PLEASE MR MATION, I'M GONNA TURN BLUE! BRRR.
OH, THERE YOU ARE. I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR YOU!
11

LET'S GO HOME, NOW.
NOVA WILL FIX YOU A NICE BOWL OF CORNFLAKES.
!
WHAT'RE YOU SO EXCITED ABOUT?
GRRR!
OH, I GET IT-- CHARADES!
LET'S SEE... "NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEADLY GIANT KILLER COCKRO--
HUH-?
!

ALL SAFE AND SOUND, KITTY, THANKS TO YOU.
GEE, MR MATION, THIS IS NOT EXACTLY THE KIND OF ACTING I HAD IN MIND.
ROWWP?
HI, THERE. MY, UH, FRIEND HERE THINKS MAYBE I SHOULD SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT IN THE VAN.
OH, UH...
IS THERE ANY PROBLEM WITH THAT?
UH, NO, NO...
SEE? JUST REJECT SMELT DOLLS.
I'M A TOY INSPECTOR FOR SNICKERBOCKER TOYS. GOTTA TAKE THESE DEFECTIVES BACK TO THE FACTORY— THEY'RE THE WRONG COLOR.
SO WHAT IS IT? YOU WANT A SMELT DOLL?
GLEEP! GLEEP! GLEEP!
THAT'S A VICIOUS ONE, E-MAN. YOU NEED ANY HELP?
NO, THANKS, ARTHUR I'M OKAY.
WILL YOU QUIT THRASHING?
13

HEY, REF, GET THE PHONE...
AHH, SHE MUSTA' LEFT TO DO HER SHOW...
RRINNGRRINNGG
HELLO...
WE KNOW YOU'RE THERE, RUNT, AND YOU JUST BETTER KEEP AWAY FROM ANGEL!
ANGEL ?
IN NEW YORK, MICHAEL'S NEPHEW DONALD KEEPS THE MICHAEL MAUSER DETECTIVE AGENCY IN OPERATION.
FLO'S
KRAASH!
MAUSER
CREDIT DENTIST
UH.... MAY I HELP YOU, UH... SIR?
REGISTER NOW!
Philo Vance!
macho self-defense
YEAH, AH'M LOOKIN' FO' DUH MOWSA MAN!
AH'M MISTUH Z O' DUH B TEAM, AN' AH WANTS HIM NOW!
UH, UH...
HI, MIKE, ANYTHING WRONG?
NO, NOTHIN' WRONG.
MUSTA' BEEN A WRONG NUMBER.
OR SOMETHIN'.
14

SATURDAY MORNING.
Y'KNOW, THIS ANIMATION'S PRETTY GOOD. THOSE SMELTS ALMOST LOOK REAL!
OH, SCOOTER SMELT, I JUST HATE TO CARRY OUT THE GARBAGE!
GEE, SMELTETTE IS REALLY SMELTED ABOUT CARRYING OUT GARBAGE.
I'VE GOT A SMELT OF AN IDEA.
GOSH, YOU SMELTS ARE SO SMELTING CLEVER...
CHAINING WERE-SMELT UNDER THE DRAIN!
!

HEY, WATCH OUT!
!
TAPIOCA FLAVOR GRANOLA
WHAT--?
STOING!
MORNIN', TRONN. SLEEP WELL?
JUST FINE, MIKE.
WHAT IS IT, TEDDY?
!!
IT'S JUST A CARTOON SHOW... HEY, THAT'S NOT A CARTOON!
YOU DON'T MEAN--?
THE CREDITS SAID THAT SHOW IS MADE IN HOLLYWOOD. SOMEBODY OUT THERE IS GOING TO ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS!
GLEEP!
HOLLYWOOD. FOR ONE WILD MOMENT, TEDDY SEES HIS DREAMS COMING TRUE. HE WILL FIND AMY IRVING. SHE WILL TAKE HIM HOME, BRUSH HIS EARS, AND...
BUT NO. THERE'S NO TIME FOR THAT NOW. TEDDY PUTS ASIDE HIS VISIONS OF ETERNAL HAPPINESS AND FACES THE JOB AT HAND.
AUSTRALIANS ARE LIKE THAT.
16

HOLLYWOOD. HOME OF THE BIG SELLOUT. THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF EVERY RIGHT-THINKING CREATIVE PERSON IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.
PHIL MATION'S SATURDAY MORNING STUDIOS...
TAPE THEIR EARS DOWN, SPRAY 'EM BLUE—
AND THEY LOOK JUST LIKE TV SMELTS!
BLUE
YOU GOT THE SCRIPT READY YET, MORTON?
DON'T YELL AT ME ABOUT DEAD-LINES!
ROLLER SMELTS By MORTON PAST-DUE DRAFT #103
I'LL SUE YOU FOR BREAKING THE "NO-UPSETTING-THE-WRITER" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
BOY, THESE CUTE LITTLE BUGGERS SURE SAVED MY CAREER!
"I WAS ABOUT READY TO END IT ALL—
"THE ANIMATORS HAD GONE ON STRIKE!
"THE WHOLE SEASON WAS DOWN THE TUBES!
Variety
ANIMATORS STRIKE
"THEN I HEARD IT!
"SOME KIND OF FLYING SAUCER—AND IT CRASHED IN MY BACKYARD!
"IT TOOK A MOMENT TO REALIZE..."
IF THEY WEREN'T GREEN THEY'D BE AWFULLY CUTE!

"THEY WEREN'T REALLY HURT, JUST SHAKEN. I TOOK THEM INSIDE FOR COCOA AND COOKIES."
SO YOU SEE, WE'RE OUT QUESTING FOR PATTY SMELT, OUR FABLED QUEEN!
SHE MUST REALLY BE SOMETHING!
OH, YES. HERE IS HER PICTURE, IN MY AMULET!
VERY NICE.
HMMM..
WE THANK YOU FOR THE COCOA...
BUT NOW WE MUST BE GOING ABOUT OUR QUEST!
FORGET IT, SHORT STUFF! I'VE GOT OTHER PLANS FOR YOU!
URP!
"AND THEN THEY HAD TO GO AND ESCAPE!"
BUT NOW THEY'RE BACK AND BLUE!
AND THEY'RE A WHOLE LOT CHEAPER THAN, REAL ANIMATION!
TAKE THAT, YOU SMELTISH SMELT SMELTER!
WHATWHATWHAT? THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE: "YOU SMELTING SMELT SMELTER!"
OH, GOODNESS! VIOLENCE! WE CAN'T LET CHILDREN SEE THAT!
SMELT TREK
I'LL SUE YOU FOR VIOLATING THE "NO-CHANGING-THE-WRITER'S-DIALOGUE" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
18

OUTSIDE THE STUDIO.
RESERVED PARKING
HEY, WAIT! WE CAN'T JUST GO BARGING IN THERE. THEY'VE GOT GUARDS!
WE'VE GOT TO SNEAK IN!
YOUR TURN!
IT'S ONE OF THOSE SMELTS WITH HIS SHEEPDOG.
YOU'RE LATE, SHORTY!
FUNNY LOOKING DOG!
HEY, GUYS, OVER HERE!
THE NOT-REALLY-A-LUNCHBEAST-- AND HIS FRIEND?

SOMEHOW, I THOUGHT YOU'D BE TALLER.
LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING. WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU!
BUT WE DON'T NEED ANY HELP NOW.
OUR QUEST IS COMPLETE!
UH, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ANY QUEST.
OUR QUEST FOR PATTY, THE ONLY SMELTETTE!
WE'VE FOUND HER AT LAST!
THE DRESSING ROOM OF KITTY PORN.
KITTY, IT'S ALMOST TIME TO GO ON-- AND YOU'RE NOT EVEN BLUE!
OH, I WAITED FOR YOU, PHIL--
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT WANT TO SPRAY ME YOURSELF!
GULP!
BLUE
DON'T MISS ANY SPOTS.
UH, KITTY...SINCE THE SMELTS WERE GONE FOR SO LONG...
WE'RE WAY BEHIND SCHEDULE. SO WE'RE ON LIVE TODAY—SO, UH, YOU HAVE TO GET ALL YOUR LINES RIGHT THE FIRST TIME...
OH, I WILL, MR. MATION-- FOR YOU...
'CAUSE YOU'RE GONNA MAKE ME A TV STAR!
BLUE
RRR...GULP! RIGHT!
20

HI, SMELTS!
SEE? IT'S PATTY—SHE'S IN THIS SHOW TOO!
WAIT, GUYS!
WAIT! SHE'S NOT--
PATTY! PATTY! PATTY!
WHAT WHATWHAT?! SHE'S GOT ON A DRESS WITH YELLOW SPOTS!
MY SCRIPT SAID RED SPOTS I'LL SUE YOU FOR VIOLATING THE "NO-CHANGING-THE-WRITER'S-ART-DIRECTIONS" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
SWAMP SMELT
OH, YES, PATTY!
WHATEVER YOU SAY!
NOW, REMEMBER, WE HAVE TO PUT ON A GOOD SHOW FOR MR. MATION!
HMMMM'H! THAT'S NO SMELTETTE! THAT'S KITTY PORN!
THE SMELTS ARE BLINDED BY LOVE RIGHT NOW, BUT I'VE GOT AN IDEA FOR LATER!
?
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THE SMELT SHOW BEGINS.
LET'S GO FOR A SMELTNIK!
WHAT A SMELTING IDEA, SMELTETTE!
SMELTERRIFIC!
IT'S SUCH A SMELTING DAY.
I JUST FEEL SO SMELTY.
BANZAI!
LOOK! SHE'S NO SMELTETTE!
HER EARS AREN'T TAPED DOWN!
HER HAIR'S A WIG!
EEEK!
HE'S RIGHT — SHE'S NOT PATTY!
SHE TRICKED US!
LET'S GET HER!
STOMP HER!
HEY!
OH, NO! NOT ON LIVE TV!
THAT'S NOT IN MY PLOT! I'LL SUE YOU FOR VIOLATING THE "NO-CHANGING-THE-WRITER'S-PLOT" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
DR. SMELT
THEY'RE RIPPING OFF ALL HER CLOTHES! YOU CAN SEE HER—OH, GOODNESS, NOT IN FRONT OF THE CHILDREN!

SCAPEGOAT IN FOUR COLORS

PART 1

by CHARLES MEYERSON

(Over the past half-dozen months Charlie's shepherded us from the 1960s to the 1980s, following the development of the independent comics market. In this, the first of a new series tracing the history of comic book regulation, Charlie sets the Wayback Machine for the year 1954, when psychiatrist Fredric Wertham wrote:

"What is the social meaning of these supermen, superwomen, superlovers super-ducks, super-mice, super-magicians, super-safecrackers? How did Nietzsche get into the nursery?")

DURING THE FIRST half of the 1950s, the comics industry was selling about a billion magazines a year. At 10¢ a copy, annual sales were totalling about 100 million dollars

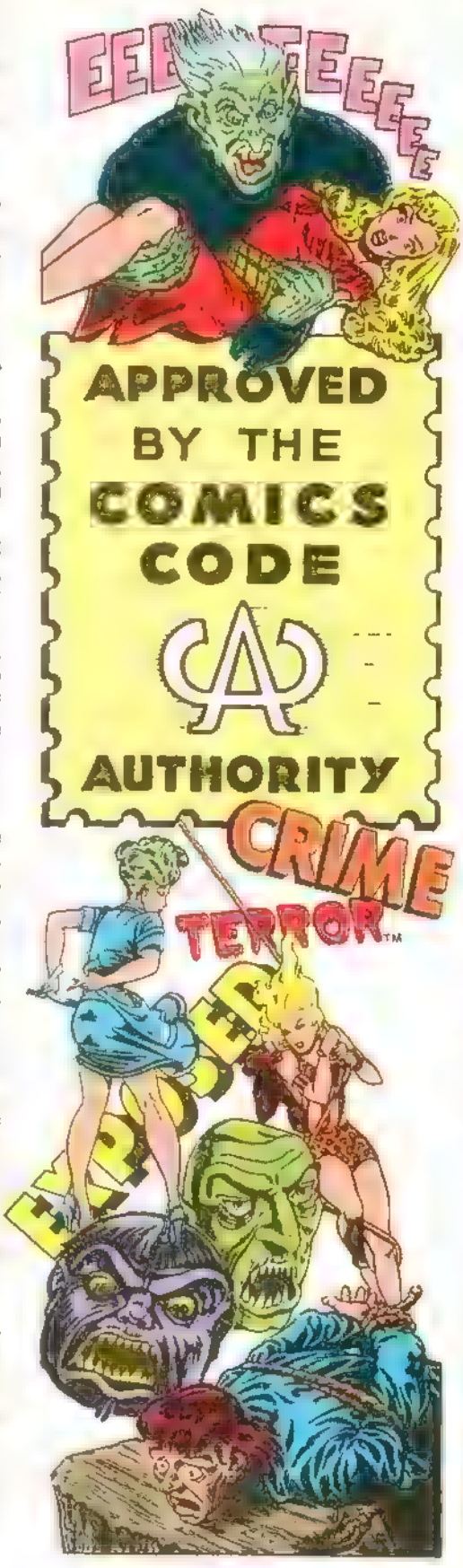
So it was probably inevitable that someone — it turned out to be Dr. Wertham — would ask what effect all those comics were having on kids.

Based upon his seven-year study, Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* presented a damning picture of the industry — although it was a picture painted with questionable logic and shaky research methods.

NEVER MIND ALL the other changes the United States faced at the same time — the automobile-assisted flight from city to suburbs, urban blight, the cold war, a recession, race tension.

As Don Thompson, now editor of the *Comics Buyer's Guide*, wrote in a collection of essays entitled *The Comic-Book Book*, "Instead of setting up control groups of children who read comics and children who did not ... Wertham found juvenile delinquents and asked them if they read comic books. Since nearly every kid read comics in those days .. the answer was almost always affirmative ... juvenile delinquents read comic books, therefore comic books cause juvenile delinquency. What could be plainer?"

Whether Wertham's book was fair or reasonable, it struck a nerve. The American Legion, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Organization for Decent Literature and others began passing resolutions, conducting boycotts and publishing monthly evaluations of comics.



LATE IN 1954, San Francisco-area Safeway food stores announced they were dropping all comics. Denver Safeway stores followed suit. Some parents publicly burned comics.

Several comics publishers got the message. They decided to try a plan for self-regulation — so the government wouldn't do it.

The first plan — The Association of Comics Magazine Publishers (ACMP), formed in 1948 — flopped because the big companies refused to participate. These included National (now DC), Dell (the Disney titles, among others), and Fawcett (Captain Marvel).

These publishers said they didn't want their image used as a cover for publishers of inferior products.

THE SUCCESSOR TO the ACMP was the Comics Magazine Association of America (CMAA), which in turn established the organization responsible for that little seal on the cover of almost all newsstand comics now: the Comics Code Authority.

It incorporated just about all the old ACMP rules: no favorable treatment of criminals; no unfavorable treatment of police; no sadism, torture, "sexy, wanton comics," vulgarity, obscenity, excessive slang, religious or racial slurs.

The Code added some new bans: no vampires; no ghouls, no ads for tobacco, liquor, knives, guns, gambling equipment or salacious items; no use of the words *horror* or *terror* in a magazine title; no use of the word *crime* alone on a cover

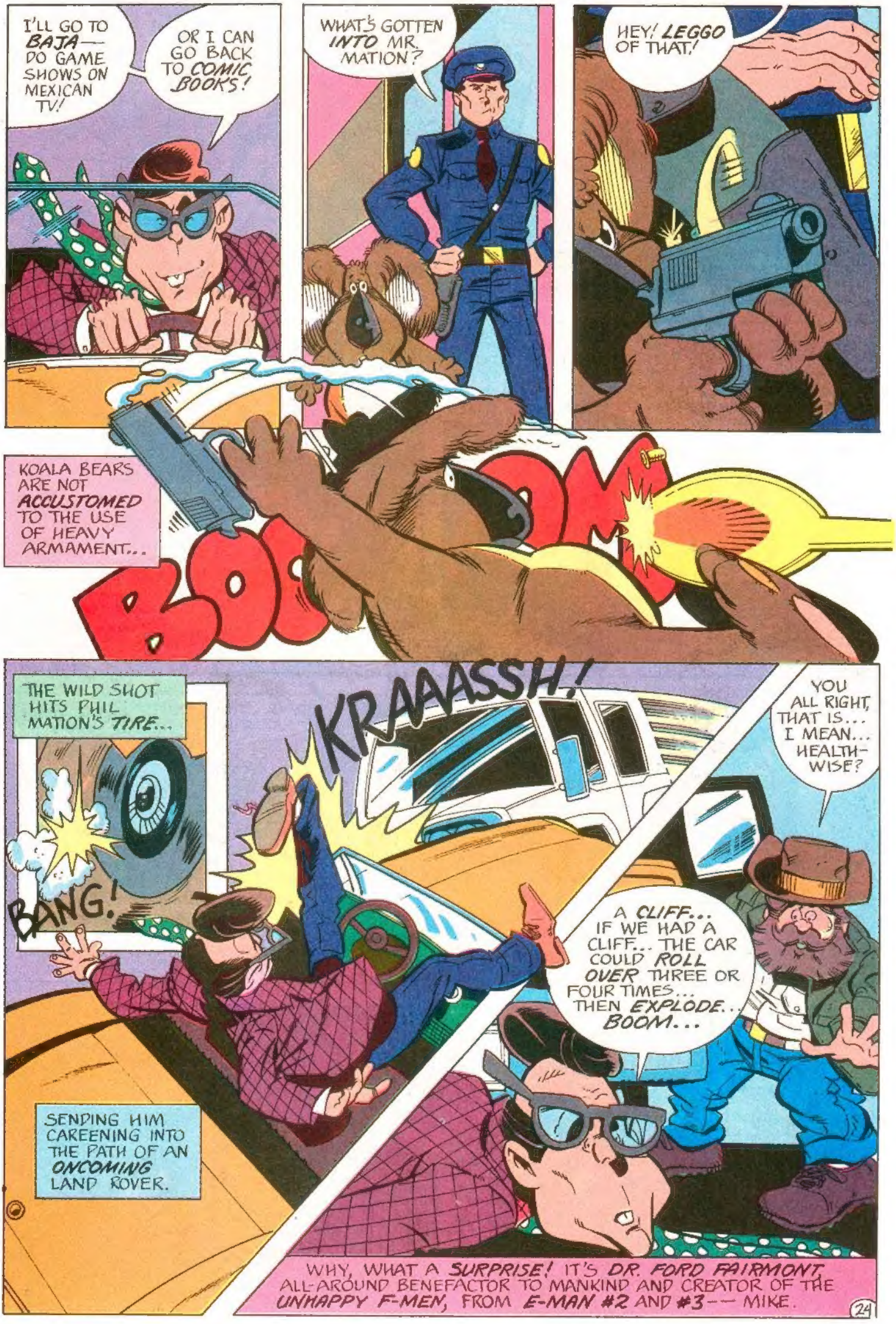
THIS TIME, IT worked. With an anxious eye toward those hordes of boycotting, burning moms and dads, 24 of the nation's 27 comics publishers agreed to submit their books to the Comics Code for approval before publication. Dell still refused, but it ran its own "Pledge to Parents" prominently in each issue. Dell's successor printer-owned publishers, Gold Key and Whitman, maintained the Code-free tradition.

As it turns out, the creation of the Comics Code came just in time to save the industry from the wrath of the Senate Subcommittee to Investigate Juvenile Delinquency.

Stay tuned. Next: The Men Who Cracked The Code

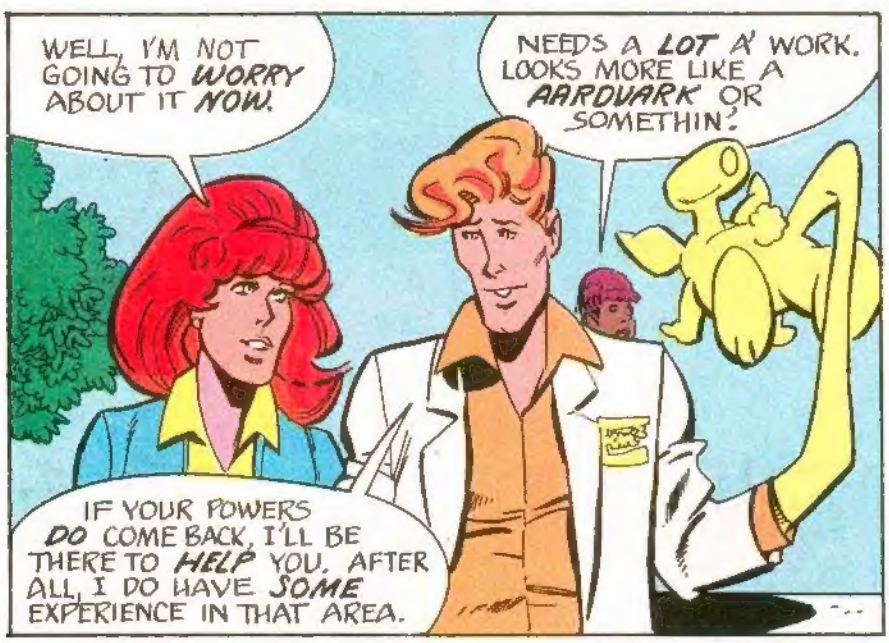
(Charlie Meyerson is the morning news anchor for WXRT Radio, Chicago.)

I'M RUINED! I'M RUINED! I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE!
EEEK!
ROOF!
WHATWHATWHAT!?
MY PAGES ARE OUT OF ORDER! I'LL SUE YOU FOR VIOLATING THE "NO-GETTING-THE-WRITER'S-PAGES-OUT-OF-ORDER" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
OH, GOODNESS! VIOLENCE, BRUTALITY, SEX! WE CAN'T LET THE CHILDREN SEE THIS!
I GOTTA GET AWAY! I CAN STILL START OVER!
THEY'LL LOVE IT!
GUYS, STOP! YOU'LL KILL HER!
WHATWHATWHAT? HE CAN'T RUN OFF!
I'LL SUE HIM FOR VIOLATING THE "NO-LEAVING-THE-WRITER-HOLDING-THE-BAG" CLAUSE IN MY CONTRACT!
WHILE E-MAN TRIES TO SUBDUE THE SMELTS, TEDDY GOES AFTER PHIL MATION...
SO SHE SAYS WE GOTTA HAVE A HOT TUB IN THE LIVING ROOM...


I'LL GO TO BAJA— DO GAME SHOWS ON MEXICAN TV!
OR I CAN GO BACK TO COMIC BOOKS!
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO MR. MATION?
HEY! LEGGO OF THAT!
KOALA BEARS ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO THE USE OF HEAVY ARMAMENT...
BOOM!
THE WILD SHOT HITS PHIL MATION'S TIRE...
KRAAASSH!
BANG!
SENDING HIM CAREENING INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING LAND ROVER.
YOU ALL RIGHT, THAT IS... I MEAN... HEALTH-WISE?
A CLIFF... IF WE HAD A CLIFF... THE CAR COULD ROLL OVER THREE OR FOUR TIMES... THEN EXPLODE.. BOOM...
WHY, WHAT A SURPRISE! IT'S DR. FORD FAIRMONT, ALL-AROUND BENEFACTOR TO MANKIND AND CREATOR OF THE UNHAPPY F-MEN, FROM E-MAN #2 AND #3 — MIKE.

GET BACK, GUYS! NO TEARING THE PRODUCER INTO LITTLE PIECES!
GIMME THAT, BEAR!
KITTY! I'VE FOUND YOU! I WAS SO WORRIED—SAFETY-WISE. BUT WHAT HAVE THEY DONE TO YOU?
DONE TO ME? NOTHING—EXCEPT NEARLY MAKE ME A SATURDAY MORNING STAR—WHICH IS A LOT MORE THAN YOU EVER DID!
YOU MADE ME AND THE OTHER KIDS DUPLICATES—OF W.I.M.P.'S F-MEN—
BUT DID YOU EVER THINK ABOUT MY FUTURE?
"I COULDN'T GO AROUND DOING SUPERMARKET APPEARANCES FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE!
MEET KITTY PORN IN PERSON
"I MEAN I WASN'T GOING TO BE A CHARMING ADOLESCENT MUTANT FOREVER-
"YOUR STUPID MUTANT ENERGIZER DIDN'T EVEN LAST THROUGH PUBERTY—I CAN'T WALK THROUGH WALLS ANYMORE!
F-MEN
THE EFFECTS OF THE ENERGIZER DON'T LAST?
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GROW UP AND I'M NOT CUTE ANYMORE? I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT BIG WHILE I STILL CAN!
BUT, KITTY—I HAD PLANS FOR YOU—CAREER-WISE!
FORGET IT, BUB. I'M OFF TO CUT MY OWN MERCHANDISING DEALS.
KITTY! WHERE DID I GO WRONG—GUIDANCE-WISE? ÷SNIFF!÷
C'MON, GUYS! NO FAIR STOMPING THE PRODUCER INTO JELLY!

CHICAGO—SOME TIME LATER.
SO, THE EFFECTS OF DR. FAIRMONT'S MACHINE MAY BE WEARING OFF. THAT EXPLAINS THE FLASHBACKS I'VE BEEN HAVING.
YO, E-MAN! BET YOU CAN'T DO A JET-POWERED BUNNY RABBIT!
YEAH. BUT SINCE IT TOOK AWAY YOUR POWERS RATHER THAN GIVING YOU SUPER ABILITIES—LIKE KITTY—THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT WILL HAPPEN! *
* NOVA GAINED ENERGY POWERS IN CHARLTON'S E-MAN #8 AND LOST THEM IN FIRST'S E-MAN #3. WHEW!--MIKE.


WELL, I'M NOT GOING TO WORRY ABOUT IT NOW.
NEEDS A LOT A' WORK. LOOKS MORE LIKE A AARDVARK OR SOMETHIN'
IF YOUR POWERS DO COME BACK, I'LL BE THERE TO HELP YOU. AFTER ALL, I DO HAVE SOME EXPERIENCE IN THAT AREA.

A COUPLE MORE DAYS AND I SHOULD HAVE THE SMELTS SPACESHIP REPAIRED SO THEY CAN CONTINUE THEIR QUEST.
GOOD. IT'S GETTING A LITTLE TIGHT IN THERE—AND I WORRY ABOUT MAUSER'S INFLUENCE ON THOSE LITTLE GREEN GUYS.

HIYA, RED. WANNA BREW?
ALEC!

POUGHKEEPSIE, IN THE LOVELY HUDSON VALLEY, A TOWN DEVOTED TO COMPUTERS—AND ELVES.
IBM
IBM
IB
IT'S ANOTHER CHECK FROM HOLLYWOOD.
SOMETIMES I REGRET SELLING THE SMELT RIGHTS TO TV.
SATURDAY MORNING STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD, CA
TO: WINSOME ROBBY AND PENNY
WRAP Graphics
Poughkeepsie, NY
SNICKERBOCKER TOYS
THEY MAKE SO MANY STUPID CHANGES, PENNY.
YES, ROBBY, BUT WE CAN KEEP THE STORY STRAIGHT IN THE BOOKS.
AND YOU EARTHLINGS DO SEEM TO LOVE THE STORIES OF THE SMELTS.
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next month:
Rosemary... and Time??